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U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Lakeview District Office
1000 Ninth Street S
Lakeview, Oregon 97630

December 1992

Scoping for the Warner Lakes Management Framework Plan Amendment for Juniper Management

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United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

LAKEVIEW DISTRICT OFFICE
P.O. BOX 151 (1000 Ninth Street S.)
Lakeview, Oregon 97630

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IN REPLY REFER TO

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December 10, 1992

Dear Reader:

The Lakeview District is starting work on an amendment to the existing Warner Lakes Management Framework Plan. This plan amendment will address proposed changes to the existing management direction for juniper in portions of the Lakeview Resource Area in Lake County, Oregon, Washoe County, Nevada and Modoc County, California. The plan amendment, which is scheduled for completion later this summer, will allow us to update previous land use decisions and will allow for public participation in the environmental analysis.

The purpose of the plan amendment is to determine how we will manage juniper in portions of the Lakeview Resource Area in Deep, Camas, Twelvemile and Twentymile Creek Canyons about fifteen miles east of Lakeview. To accomplish this, it is necessary to identify and resolve multiple use conflicts (issues) related to the management of public lands in the plan amendment area.

The preliminary issues and proposed alternatives discussed in this mailer were developed from staff discussions, informal public comment and ongoing contacts with local governments, and known user or interest groups. Your comments on this mailer will be considered in the preparation of a more detailed list of issues, resource objectives and alternatives. Once the issues, alternatives and objectives are formalized, they will provide the basis of the draft plan amendment, scheduled for completion during the summer of 1993.

Public involvement is an essential step in ensuring that this land use plan includes the many possible land uses which best serve the public interest. I encourage you to closely review this mailer and submit your comments to the Lakeview District Office by February 1, 1992 or attend the public meeting which will be held on Tuesday, January 12 from 7:00-9:00 p.m. in the Lakeview District Office conference room at 1000 South Ninth in Lakeview. If you have any questions about this planning process, or if you would like to be on the mailing list please contact Renee Snyder at the above address or telephone number.

Sincerely,

Judy Ellen Nelson

Judy Ellen Nelson
Lakeview District Manager

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About the Area

The area to be covered by the Warner Lakes Management Framework Plan Amendment and Environmental Assessment for Juniper Management includes about 13,000 acres of land managed by the Lakeview Resource Area in Lake County, Oregon, 500 acres in Washoe County, Nevada and 10 acres in Modoc County, California. The lands covered by this MFP Amendment are those managed by the BLM in view of Oregon State Highway 140 from Parsnip Creek to Adel, Oregon and in Deep, Camas, Twelvemile and Twentymile Creek Canyons (See map).

When the Warner Lakes Management Framework Plan was approved in 1983, juniper was not recognized as a serious watershed concern. It wasn't felt that it would affect water yield or riparian or watershed condition. Since then, it has become widely recognized that with an increase in the density of juniper stands, aspen stands will decline, spring flow amounts and duration will decrease and watershed erosion can increase. These effects result from the juniper out-competing soil-protecting perennial grasses and herbaceous vegetation for moisture and nutrients. As a result, the MFP, as currently approved, does not accommodate significant program changes for management of juniper. In addition, it does not allow management of juniper within view of State Highway 140, or in Deep, Camas or Twentymile Creek Canyons.

Western juniper is a tree or semi-shrub which grows on drier sites in the Pacific Northwest, northern California and along the upper slopes of the Sierra Nevada. Young actively growing juniper forms a main trunk with many lateral branches. Older trees on poorer sites have several main branches growing from a central base. Juniper leaves are scale like bracts overlapping along the twigs. Cones are small blue berries, often with a covering of white powdery dust. The bark is thick, shaggy and grey in color when weathered, but when freshly cut is reddish-brown.

Older western juniper is usually found on low sage flats and on rocky rims, where they are protected from fire.

Although the planning area covers 13,500 acres, it is not proposed to remove juniper from the entire area. Based on a vegetation and condition survey conducted between 1986 and 1988, juniper density is at least 9% greater now on 5,585 acres of the planning area than if the sites were in excellent condition. This includes 220 acres in Parsnip Creek, 2580 acres in Deep Creek, 1785 acres in Twelvemile Creek and 1000 acres in Twentymile Creek Canyons. These higher density areas will receive priority for treatment, especially for watershed improvement objectives. Not all the acres of high density juniper will be treated due to concerns for ancient juniper, wildlife and visual objectives. In some cases, areas of lesser juniper density will be treated to alleviate direct impacts to riparian areas and aspen.

The purpose of this amendment is to guide management action and set goals for juniper management in the planning area. Exact treatment plans will be determined following public input and careful analysis through the planning process.

The Planning Process and Criteria

Planning criteria are prepared to guide the development of the MFP amendment/environmental assessment and ensure that it is tailored to the identified issues. The three basic purposes of the planning criteria are: (1) to guide the overall process by focusing on the real issues and concerns, (2) to guide the development of meaningful alternatives which address the issues and provide a basis for the amendment and, (3) to provide a basis for the District and Area Manager to select a preferred alternative and make decisions following the completion of the amendment.

We suggest the following planning criteria:

1. Focus the amendment on the planning area (see map).
2. Focus on those issues which directly affect proposed juniper management.
3. Adhere to all provisions of existing public laws, Department and Bureau policy, and currently applicable land use decisions.

The amendment would be tiered to recreation and visual resource management prescriptions in existing documents such as the Wilderness Study Report and Allotment Management Plans.

4. Manage to protect scientific, scenic, historic, archaeological, ecological, environmental, atmospheric and hydrologic values.

An interdisciplinary team of resource specialists from the Lakeview District will be used to prepare the plan and the environmental assessment.

Disciplines to be represented are wildlife, forestry, fisheries, sensitive plants, recreation, visual resources, watershed, range management, fuels management, wilderness and land use planning.

Background for the Issues

Western juniper has been a part of the Warner Valley ecosystem for at least the last 5000 years. Its range and density have fluctuated through the years based on climatic changes. Since the early 1900's, juniper has expanded dramatically both in range and in density of stands.

Recent juniper invasion has been caused by a combination of factors including improper live-stock grazing and fire suppression. Poorly managed livestock grazing reduces grass cover, allowing the juniper to compete with other vegetation more effectively. In the past, fires occurred about every 25-50 years. This tended to kill

junipers before they could compete with ground cover such as grasses, forbs and shrubs which are more effective at minimizing surface runoff and erosion. By removing those fine fuels that carry fire, grazing also served to decrease the fire interval. Control of wildfire by settlers and later by government agencies has allowed juniper to expand its range and density further.

When juniper first becomes established on a site as seedlings, it has little effect. Once the saplings overtop the surrounding vegetation they begin to effectively compete with other vegetation. As ground cover from other vegetation decreases, surface runoff and erosion increases. As juniper canopy cover increases, it intercepts much of the precipitation before it can reach the ground. In some densities, juniper can use soil moisture amounts equal to nearly nine inches of rainfall in a growth year. Around springs, aspen areas and riparian zones juniper can use enough of the available water to restrict or eliminate riparian vegetation on the site, or deplete spring flows.

Due to increasing juniper density, many of the aspen stands in the plan amendment area are becoming decadent, spring flows are decreasing and watershed erosion is increasing. It has become apparent that control of juniper in the plan area is needed to restore functional watershed conditions and maximize response to ongoing management on the critical riparian zones.

The 1983 Warner Lakes Management Framework Plan allowed for limited juniper management. The total number of acres of juniper which can be removed are constrained, cleared areas can be no more than ten acres, and major vegetative alteration is prohibited within one mile of Deep Creek, Camas Creek and Twentymile Creek Canyons for recreation and visual reasons. Vegetative alteration within Deep Creek Canyon and within view of Oregon State Highway 140 is prohibited and is restricted within five miles of all major travel routes and recreation sites to minimize visual impacts.

Proposed Issues

The Lakeview District would like the public to consider the following proposed issues to be addressed in an amendment to the Warner Lakes Management Framework Plan.

1. What constitutes ancient juniper, what sites do they occupy and what level of protection will be afforded to them?
2. What actions will be taken to protect visual resources both in the short term and in the long term?
3. Where and how much juniper should be left to provide thermal and hiding cover for deer and habitat for other species?
4. Should juniper management be allowed within the boundary of the Fish Creek Rim Wilderness Study Area?
5. What will be done to increase stream and ground cover, and reduce stream sedimentation and erosion in order to improve watershed and fish habitat condition?
6. What methods will be allowed for juniper removal and disposal?

Preliminary Alternatives

Land use plan alternatives are a means of arraying and analyzing the potential ways the Bureau could manage the land and associated resource values. The following alternatives are suggested solely to provide a general format and scope of potential alternatives to be addressed in the MFP amendment. These do not represent fixed alternatives the BLM has decided upon for the planning analysis. As the amendment will deal only with juniper management in those areas along Oregon State Highway 140 and in Deep, Camas, Twelvemile and Twentymile Creek Canyons, and not all

resources or land values, the alternatives for the document will be constrained compared to a plan amendment that addresses all land types and all resources.

A Lakeview Resource Area-wide plan revision or Resource Management Plan, which would be analyzed through an environmental impact statement, is not firmly scheduled at this time. Decisions made through this plan amendment for juniper management could be incorporated into a resource management plan and might also serve as a demonstration area for future site-specific proposals.

Alternative 1: Maintain Present Situation (No Action)

The areas proposed for juniper management would be managed under current MFP direction with a continuation of the restrictions on vegetation manipulation. Wildlife habitat for thermal and hiding cover and visual resources would be protected. Wildfires would be aggressively suppressed and no use of prescribed fire would be anticipated in the subject area.

Alternative 2: Juniper management to meet watershed, wildlife and riparian objectives, excluding the Fish Creek Rim Wilderness Study Area.

In those areas outside the Fish Creek Rim Wilderness Study Area, juniper would be managed to provide benefits for improved watershed and stream condition. Restrictions on vegetative manipulation would be modified to allow for removal of juniper in most areas while still providing for protection of wildlife hiding cover and visual resources.

Within the Fish Creek Rim Wilderness Study Area, areas proposed for juniper management would be managed under the current MFP direction.

Written interpretive material and an interpretive site along Oregon Highway 140 in the project area will be developed to explain to travellers and interested parties the purpose for juniper management projects.

Alternative 3: Juniper management to meet watershed, wildlife and riparian objectives, including the Fish Creek Rim Wilderness Study Area.

Juniper would be managed to provide benefits for improved watershed and stream condition. Restrictions on vegetative manipulation would be modified to allow for removal of juniper in most areas while still providing for protection of wildlife hiding cover and visual resources.

Written interpretive material and an interpretive site along Oregon Highway 140 in the project area will be developed to explain to travellers and interested parties the purpose for juniper management projects.

What Can You Do to Help?

We ask that you consider each of the proposed issues, along with the preliminary alternatives. Do you agree the important resource issues have been identified? Do you feel the alternatives present a reasonable range of actions for juniper management in the plan amendment area? If after looking over the information presented you feel we have overlooked an important issue related to juniper management, we would appreciate your help in identifying it.

For a comment to be helpful to us, it should relate to a specific concern or conflict that is within the legal responsibility of the Bureau of Land Management and it must be a concern or conflict BLM can effectively resolve in the planning process.

Comments can be written and mailed to us at the address shown below, and we also encourage you to attend the public meeting which has been scheduled. We are interested in meeting with any who wish to discuss this plan amendment. If you or your group is interested, please contact us to schedule an appropriate time.

Renee Snyder
P.O. Box 151, 1000 South Ninth
Lakeview, Oregon 97630
(503) 947-2177

Public Meetings

We have scheduled a public meeting to give the public an opportunity to discuss the proposed issues and alternatives suggested by BLM resource specialists and managers. The meeting will be held from 7:00-9:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 12 in the BLM's Lakeview District Office at 1000 South Ninth St. in Lakeview. Anyone interested in participating in planning for juniper management on public lands in the Warner Basin tributaries is invited to attend.

Planning Schedule

Publish Notice of Intent to prepare amendment in the Federal Register - December 18, 1992

Send out scoping letter to the public - December 18, 1992

Public meeting January 12, 1993

BLM would meet with groups who make the request during the 45-day scoping period

Forty-five day public scoping period ending February 1, 1993.

Publish the draft amendment and environmental assessment and begin the 45-day public review and comment period - March 15, 1993.

Schedule field tour of the area and public meeting for interested parties during the 45-day review period

BLM would meet with groups who make the request during the 45 day review and public comment period.

End 45-day public review and comment period
April 30, 1993

Publish proposed amendment and begin the 30-day protest period - June 1 (estimated)

Implement the proposed plan - July 5 (estimated assuming no public protests or Governor objections)

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